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Portuguese Memories Made in Spain: How the Spanish Television Series *Cuéntame cómo pasó* Became *Conta-me Como Foi*

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Resumen

La serie de televisión portuguesa *Conta-me Como Foi* ha recibido poca atención por parte de los académicos, sin duda porque es un *remake* de la exitosa serie española *Cuéntame cómo pasó*. Además, quien quiera estudiar la serie tiene que enfrentar el hecho de que esta historia, supuestamente sobre la memoria histórica de Portugal, tiene su origen en España. Este estudio responde a la siguiente pregunta: ¿Qué significa el hecho de que una nación adopte y rehaga una serie televisiva que trata sobre la memoria histórica de otra nación? En el caso de *Conta-me Como Foi,* el resultado implica muchos estratos de significado que permiten que la serie portuguesa sea tanto una copia de la versión original española, como una expresión única de la cultura e identidad portuguesas.
Palabras clave: Cuéntame – Conta-me – Televisión Portuguesa – Televisión Española – Media-memoria – Transadaptación.

Abstract

The Portuguese television series *Conta-me Como Foi* has received little scholarly attention, undoubtedly because it is a remake of the successful Spanish series *Cuéntame cómo pasó*, and has raised questions about how Portuguese memories could have originated in Spain. This paper examines what it means for one nation to adopt a television series about national memory from another one. In the case of *Conta-me Como Foi,* the result is a rich layer of voices, allowing the Portuguese series to be both a copy of the Spanish original and a unique expression of Portuguese cultural identity.

Keywords: Cuéntame – Conta-me – Portuguese Television – Spanish Television – Media Memory – Transadaptation.

Introduction

In the last decade, television series that highlight specific moments in Portuguese history have dominated Portuguese television. This turn to historical drama began with the very successful series *Conta-me Como Foi* (Fernando Ávila, Jorge Queiroga and Sérgio Graciano), which ran for five seasons from 2007 to 2011 and focused on life in Portugal from 1968 to 1974. Its success inspired two more series, which each ran for one season, and one miniseries. The first series, *Depois do Adeus* (Sérgio Graciano and Patrícia Sequeira 2013), picks up where *Conta-me Como Foi* left off, telling the story of post-revolutionary Portugal through the lives of *retornados,* those who returned to Lisbon from Luanda, Angola after the Carnation Revolution of 1974. The second one, *Os Filhos do Rock* (Pedro Varela 2013-2014), narrates Portuguese life in the 1980s through the youth culture of rock music. Finally, the miniseries *Mulheres de Abril* (Henrique Oliveira 2014) debuted on the fortieth anniversary of the April 25, 1974 revolution and tells the often over-looked role of women in this revolution. While *Conta-me Como Foi* is no longer being produced, its legacy continues to heavily influence Portuguese television. Each new historical series is often announced as being "na misma linea de Conta-me Como Foi" (*Depois do Adeus* 2013)[1] to gain credibility and make a bid for an established fan base. As recently as 2014, *Conta-me* received the maximum honour for a series produced by Portuguese Public Television (RTP) when it won the *Lumen* award for best Portuguese television series of all time.

Television studies have long asserted television's power to shape a culture's view of itself and collective memory. Current research, however, is increasingly bolder in claiming that television is now the primary way in which we make sense of the past (e.g. Edgerton and Rollins 2001). Since consumption of televised programing is often serial, the cumulative reinforcement of a message makes it a particularly powerful medium for creating collective memories (Holdsworth 2012: 140). *Conta-me*'s success in constructing a collective Portuguese memory has received shockingly little scholarly attention, undoubtedly, because this series about

[1] This quote comes from the Facebook page of *Depois do Adeus,* which announced the end of that series and the beginning of *Os Filhos do Rock*.

Portuguese history and memory is a remake of the acclaimed Spanish television series *Cuéntame cómo pasó* (Miguel Ángel Bernardeau 2001-present), which is currently in its eighteenth season in Spain. The transformation of a Spanish show into a Portuguese one is a perfect example of the complexity of transnational television programs. When read together, these two national television series demonstrate the incredible power of media to reduce supposedly unique national identities to formulas that are endlessly repeated across the globe. This complex process is both disheartening and encouraging. Media memories, despite seeming distinctively "ours" are often borrowed cultural products "made" somewhere else. However, each repetition adds a layer of complexity, asking the new local setting to grapple with how to define itself in both a local and a transnational context. In the case of the Portuguese remake, *Conta-me Como Foi,* an international/national dialectic is always present and, when taken into account, allows for a richer understanding of the series.

Mediating Spanish Memory

The transformation of Spanish memory into Portuguese memory is a complex, and sometimes unclear, process. When the Portuguese television producer RTV released boxed DVD sets of the first seasons of *Conta-me Como Foi*, they unconsciously revealed this tension. The front cover of the box proudly declares: "A melhor série de televisão portuguesa de todos os tempos", while the back cover acknowledges that this is an adaptation of the Spanish series "Cuentame como pasó [sic]" - not bothering to get the accents right in the Spanish title.[2] The Portuguese research group for OBITEL, who publishes the only complete data set on current Portuguese television programs, categorizes *Conta-me Como Foi* as a foreign series rather than a national one, despite the fact that RTP's own website lists the series as national.

The Portuguese producers of *Conta-me* were undoubtedly attracted to the extreme success of the original Spanish show *Cuéntame cómo pasó*, which has been so popular that it is credited with playing a major role in changing the perception of Spanish TV from that of *la caja tonta* and *telebasura* to an industry capable of

[2] I am referring to the boxes entitled Conta-me Como Foi, 1ª Série, parte 1, episódios 1-13 and 1ª Série, parte 2, episódios 14-26. Each box contained four disks.

high-quality programming in what Paul Julian Smith has christened "the New Golden Age" of Spanish TV (2006: 12). The Spanish *Cuéntame* has won some 70 different awards, including a nomination for an Emmy in 2003 for best foreign TV fiction series. Despite recent scandals over finances and staffing, the show has consistently held a top slot in Spanish prime time. It also represents a transition from traditional television watching to other models of consumption that include DVD releases, on-line archives, social media fan clubs, and a whole line of products: for example, the *Cuéntame* cookbook, magazine and trivia board game.

Cuéntame effectively combines drama and comedy in an entertaining commentary on recent Spanish history, beginning with late Francoism and extending through the Transition to democracy, as seen through the daily life of a typical Spanish family: Los Alcántara. It is a classic example of macrohistory through the *intrahistoria* of a family made up of father, mother, three children (a fourth child is born in season six) and the grandmother with a large cast of extended family, neighbours and friends. The main character is Carlos, the youngest son, who is eight when the series opens in a working class neighbourhood of Madrid in 1968. The story is narrated in voice-off by an adult Carlos who looks back on the Spain of his childhood with what Juan Carlos Rueda Laffond calls "saccharine nostalgia", which perpetuates the cliché of the happy sixties (2011: 175). The series' developers openly took inspiration from the U.S. series *The Wonder Years* (Carol Black and Neal Marlens 1988-1993). There was a conscious choice, however, to make specific historical events much more central to the plot (Rueda Laffond and Guerra Gómez 2009: 406-8) than in the American series. The fact that historical events are not just commented on by the characters, but frequently affect them directly separates the series from other previous historic fictions set in Spain (Palacio 2007: 79).

The debut episode begins with the Alcántara family buying its first television set, and from that moment forward, news, programmes, and even the publicity that appear on the Alcántara's TV set will play a pivotal role in the plot.[3] The Spanish public television channel RTVE, which produces the series, was Spain's only

[3] While the television set and the images it projects are central to the early seasons of *Cuéntame*, they are increasingly less so in the later seasons as the natural progression of life takes the family members in many different directions and away from their television set.

television channel up until the 1990s. Thus, the producers of the series have at their disposal the vast RTVE media archives, including thousands of NO-DO reels, making it relatively cost-effective for them to incorporate actual footage from the past into the series. This happens two ways: appearing on the Alcántara's TV screen and sometimes replacing the image that we are seeing. At moments, the past image is manipulated to morph with a current image, and the actors of *Cuéntame* are inserted into film frames from the past. This mixing of the two pasts - an archival one filmed in the historical moment and a fictitious one filmed recently and impregnated with current Spanish concerns - has generated a lot of interest among diverse scholars: media scholars who study the complex visual techniques of what has become known as "docudrama", for example Medina (2008b), and also cultural scholars who are interested in the way this series shapes Spain's vision of its past, for example Corbalán (2009), Cueto Asín (2009), Rey (2013), and more recently the book-length study by Pousa (2015), a former scriptwriter for the show.

The effect of embedded media in this series is very powerful, as the mix between the fictitious story and "real" historical clips is part of what makes the audience find the series so believable. In surveys the Spanish audience credits the show's popularity to its extreme realism with 78.8% of the audience saying that the series gives a "faithful or extremely faithful" representation of the era and almost 95% saying that it is a true picture of the "typical" Spanish family (Grandío 2008: 145, 151). The insertion of the documentary clips not only infuses the show with verisimilitude, but also with authority as the show has the power to re-purpose the authoritative NO-DO archives. The show achieves a far-reaching nostalgia in an extremely varied audience - young and old, male and female all watch the program, and more often than not, as a family (Cortés Lahera 2008: 91-93). Laura Pousa goes so far as to say that the show has become not just a reference point for Spanish television, but also for Spanish history (2015: 10).

Cuéntame's success has not just been internal. It has been sold to over twenty different countries either *en lata* (the completed product that is played dubbed or with subtitles) or *en formato*. In this second version, the country that buys the format remakes the series with its own actors, adapting the series as needed to make it believable in that country. These remakes similarly revolve around a "typical" family living out their own national history in Portugal,

Italy, and Chile, for example. As recently as 2015, New World Media, a US Production company, announced that it had purchased the rights to produce an American version of *Cuéntame* that will be released as *Remember When.*

Mediating Portuguese Memory

Cuéntame's nostalgia for a more innocent national past translates quite smoothly into the Portuguese context. Milly Buonanno, who has studied extensively the international flows of television, calls stories that have not just been translated, but also adapted to a new socio-political context "transadaptions" (2007: 101). Portugal has routinely bought the format rights to successful Spanish TV shows and remade them with Portuguese actors, but generally the shows have been sitcoms that "travel well" – in other words, a simple character-based plot that easily translates into another language or context, and since Spain and Portugal naturally have what Buonanno calls "cultural proximity" (2007: 96), even things such as humour or social values are quite easy to translate. Portugal had its own versions of the successful Spanish sitcoms *Médico de família* (Daniel Écija 1995-1999) and *Los Serrano* (Daniel Écija 2003-2008), which ran in Portugal as *Médico de Família* (Miguel Queiroga and Manuel Amaro da Costa 1998-2000) and *Os Serranos* (Manuel Amaro da Costa and Telma Meira 2005-2006)[4] .

Cuéntame, however, is much less travel-friendly, at least on the surface, as it is heavily rooted in Spanish culture and historical events. Its ability to travel at all is due to the fact it operates on an international/national dialectic based on internationally recognizable themes that can be situated in a specific context that smacks very strongly of the local: accents, clothes, domestic furnishings, gestures, etc. (Rueda Laffond and Guerra Gómez 2009: 2-3). Thus, both the original Spanish format and the Portuguese adaptation are much more universal and less Spanish and Portuguese than the RTVE or RTP's publicity will ever admit. The Spanish series begins with a largely American model with four storylines per episode and characters based on stock personalities that a well-versed audience would instantly recognize (Medina 2008a: 124 and Pousa 2015: 17-

[4] RTP has recently released another transadaption *O Ministério do Tempo* (Bruno Cerveira 2017-present), which is a remake of the Spanish *El ministerio del tiempo* (Javier Olivares and Pablo Olivares 2015-present).

19). That said, the strength of both the original and the transadaption lies in the very expensive, but extremely meticulous contextualization with period-correct decorations, clothes, household products, TV commercials and the aforementioned documentary clips inserted throughout the show. The original Spanish version cost as much as 600,000 Euros per episode to produce (Lacalle 24 July 2012 interview), while the Portuguese transadaption averaged 90,000 Euros per episode, making it the most expensive show ever produced at that time by RTP (Henriques 2011).

Shared and Borrowed Memories of 1968

Comparing five seasons of episodes is well beyond the scope of any one study, and since even the number of episodes per season varied between countries, I will limit the range of this study to the earliest episodes that deal only with the historical year of 1968. Beginning the series in a year that is iconic to all of Western culture made the series more travel-friendly in general, but especially so for Portugal. While there are very important differences in the history of Spain and Portugal in the twentieth century, the overarching story is remarkably parallel, and in 1968, both countries find themselves in a very similar social-political moment. Each had entered the twentieth century with a continuation of the nineteenth-century battles between conservatives and liberals. Both had early experiments with liberal governments that gave way to fascist-leaning dictatorships that lasted most of the twentieth century. António de Oliveira Salazar, who took control of Portugal four years before the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, shared many of the same tendencies as his Spanish counterpart, Francisco Franco. The two dictators implemented policies of cultural and economic isolation, severely censored free speech and were not afraid to resort to violence to keep power. At the beginning of 1968, both dictators were elderly and both countries were experiencing a gradual opening to new economic and cultural influences. That said, the average citizen still lived in fear of doing anything considered subversive to the regime.

In these first episodes, the overall narrative structure stays the same in the Portuguese adaptation, which is not unexpected, as every change costs money. The cheapest thing to do when you purchase the format rights to a series is to translate each episode word for word and even to film it with similar camera shots, voice-

over and montage. In the migration from Spain to Portugal, the Alcántara family seamlessly becomes the Lopes family, with each member of the family retaining the same personality traits and often the same name. Both families face the same everyday battles: intergenerational struggles, financial hardships, fear of rapid social change and, most importantly, fear of the regime. Both families deal with the arrival of birth control, bikinis, hippies, progressive clergymen, and a mounting economic envy that resulted from the new ability to purchase things in monthly instalments. The underlying premise is common to most Western historical dramas and pivots on the idea that while these were difficult years in our history, they were positive years when we were more naïve about the world and perhaps even happier in our innocence. The Alcántaras and the Lopes will face difficulties, but ultimately the average citizen is portrayed as progressing both economically and socially, as each member of the family moves at different paces away from narrow traditional values to broader cosmopolitan ones.

Despite heavy carryovers from the Spanish version, small details work powerfully to make certain acts seem typically Portuguese. While watching corresponding episodes back to back, I wavered between seeing the Portuguese producers take the easy way out and merely translate word for word from the Spanish script and marvelling at the effectiveness of subtle changes to portray Portuguese difference. Portugal's obsession with the perfect cup of coffee is highlighted in the transadaptation of a scene in which a waiter sits down two cups of coffee and says "dos cafés" in the Spanish version, but "dois cafés bem tirados" in the otherwise identical Portuguese version. Language, accent, gestures and a host of little cultural references powerfully work together to convince the viewer that he or she is watching something authentically Portuguese, when, in the end, most of what appears on the screen is a direct copy of the Spanish version.

There are interesting visual changes in the Portuguese version that reinforce the idea of a more traditional Portugal: the Portuguese grandmother wears black or dark grey to show that she is a widow, while the Spanish grandmother has slightly bolder tastes in clothes. The Portuguese Toni wears a suit to university every day instead of the more casual clothes of his Spanish homologue. In the Portuguese classroom, Carlos and his friends wear white smocks to class, but the Spanish Carlos does not. The Portuguese father wears a different

coloured overcoat from the other workers in his afternoon job as a shift manager in a printing press to show his higher rank, whereas in the Spanish version his overcoat is the same colour as the others. While in both versions, the eldest son Toni feels pressure to be the first in the family to get a university degree, in the Portuguese version, he has the added burden of fearing the arrival of a letter drafting him into the Portuguese army, as Portugal was embroiled in wars on several fronts fighting to maintain control of their African colonies.

The only character who undergoes a personality shift in the migration from Spain to Portugal is the mother. Ana Duato, who plays the Spanish mother, made waves in the first season of *Cuéntame* for her portrayal of a boisterous Spanish woman. In interviews with the Portuguese actors right before the debut of *Conta-me*, they commented on this difference, saying that the Portuguese mother "é mais triste que a espanhola, uma vez que os portugueses são um povo tradicionalmente mais trágico" (Cardoso 2007).

What had to change in each episode was the embedded media. Fortunately, the Portuguese public television channel RTP likewise held a monopoly of Portuguese television under the dictatorship and boasts the largest archive of visual media in Portugal. For the most part, every time there is embedded media in the Spanish version, it is substituted with clips from the Portuguese television archive. This sometimes changes the plot slightly as there is often a parallel story running on the TV news that ties into an event in the family. To understand the complexity of this project, one need go no further than the first episode, which in the Spanish version begins with clips of the Spanish singer Massiel's performance that won the 1968 Eurovision contest for best song. Footage from the contest opens and closes the episode. Of course, Portugal did not win the competition in 1968, so this parallel story is filled with other news clips, about the *Festival da Canção Portuguesa* and the Portuguese Colonial Wars in Africa, which began with armed uprisings in its African colonies in 1961 (Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau) and continued until 1974. Throughout the Portuguese series, all references to the Spanish Civil War are left out or changed to references about World War II.

All references to Franco are regularly replaced with Salazar, a problematic substitution in that it flattens significant differences in the way the memory of these two dictators has been dealt with both inside and outside their respective countries. During much of the

twentieth century, the international press treated Salazar much more favourably than it treated Franco. In 1940, *LIFE Magazine* called Salazar "By far the best dictator" and "the greatest Portuguese since Prince Henry the Navigator" (1940: 65). Six years later, *TIME Magazine* put him on the front cover with the caption "Portugal's Salazar. Dean of Dictators" (1946). Nevertheless, the opening of previously restricted archives has confirmed what many already knew: that Salazar's *Estado Novo* was not free of torture, long-term political imprisonment and other human rights' abuses (e.g. Menezes 2010). Portugal remains divided on how to remember their former leader. The older generation remembers well the fear of life under Salazar, but they also long for an era that they remember as being free of crime and unemployment. In fact, the nostalgia for this era is such that in a TV contest in 2007, "Os Grandes Portugueses", sponsored by RTP, the viewing public voted Salazar the "Greatest Portuguese of all Time". The results, of course, were highly polemical and severely questioned by the left as a conservative manipulation. While there is by no means consensus in Spain over Franco's memory, and groups still gather at his tomb in show of support for his legacy, it is impossible to imagine him winning the title of "Greatest Spaniard of all Time", even in the most flawed of polls. The Portuguese *Conta-me* fails to show the more nuanced opinions of Salazar held by the Portuguese during his lifetime and today.

Furthermore, to be a realistic portrayal of 1968, the Portuguese version also had to add one very important event unique to Portuguese history. In August 1968, the 79-year-old Salazar fell backwards, injuring himself so severely that he was never fully able to govern again. Marcello Caetano became prime minister in his stead after pledging to maintain the political project that Salazar began with his *Estado Novo*. The Portuguese series takes one Spanish episode and turns it into two episodes to make room to introduce Salazar's accident and the resulting political uncertainty. Therefore, in the Portuguese version there are fourteen episodes dedicated to 1968, while in the Spanish version there are only thirteen.

Whose memory?

Both series effectively use the story of one family to allow for a relatively safe view of a politically charged past, or, as in the words of Smith (speaking specifically about the Spanish version), "the warm

emotionalism" successfully "takes the edge off" the ongoing social and political battles of the past and of the present (2004: 374). Both series offer a fairly conservative view of the past, but more often than not, take a more liberal stand on issues that continue to divide Spanish and Portuguese culture, for example abortion, sexuality, birth control and gender roles.

While most of the characters are ambivalent about their political views, they are presented as consistently growing toward a desire for a more liberal and democratic nation. Diana Rey has argued that the Spanish version, like a religious altarpiece, tells a familiar story that society has already accepted as true and rather than changing viewers perception of the past, just reinforces the image they already have (2013: 128-29). Irene Visedo, who plays the role of the eldest daughter, Inés, in the Spanish version[5] has perhaps stated it best, describing the show in an interview as "comprometida pero *light*" (*Telediscreta* 2007).[6] While the adults in these series face real concerns and lack of freedom under their governments, and secondary characters even face imprisonment, the parents' worst fears never materialize, and the irony of the parallel stories in the kids' lives provides a comic relief that keeps any tension in check. Both countries' stories are told through a narrative that smacks very strongly of the American Dream: If a family works hard and makes some sacrifices, they will inevitably get ahead. The result is an inoffensive view of the past that presents both countries as becoming more modern and more European.

Media memories frequently borrow from different pasts to create a common shared memory. As such, an individual can have very explicit memories of an age that they never lived and even experience nostalgia about that era. For example, young people today, more likely than not, have "memories" about the 1960s even though they were born later. Their memories come, of course, from all of the films, music and television programs that they have experienced from and about that era. These memories, nevertheless, are very real because they have experienced them, often in a very emotional way (e.g. Neiger, et. al. 2011). Consciously or not, both

[5] Irene Visedo played the role of Inés from 2001 to 2007. She was replaced by Pilar Punzano who took over the role of Inés until 2010, when Irene Visedo returned to the show.

[6] This interview is no longer available online, as *Telediscreta* ceased operations in 2008.

the Spanish and the Portuguese audiences were watching a borrowed "media memory" that was not fully their own, but rather layered with many other voices.

One Episode up Close

An in-depth look at one early episode in both of its Iberian avatars will show that there is more at stake in the transformation of *Cuéntame* into *Conta-me* than merely maintaining the universal appeal of the show and adapting the setting and details to make it appear local. Episode eleven in the Spanish version, "Educación y mundología" becomes episode twelve in Portugal, "Do Minho a Timor". The same underlying tensions drive the plot and subplots in both versions of this episode. The father fears losing his afternoon job at a printing press since he does not understand how a new piece of equipment works. He also fears the mother signing a contract that would allow her in-home sewing business to grow to the extent that she makes more money than he does. The grown daughter fears not knowing how to be fulfilled in a society that discriminates against women, and the older son wants to get involved in the burgeoning social protests taking place among university students, but he does not fully understand the difference between political groups or even why they are protesting the Vietnam War in the first place. Throughout the program, these "real" struggles that the audience can relate to are mitigated by the fact that Carlos and his friends are constantly getting themselves into comical predicaments. In this episode, the boys naively act out the regime's imperialist discourse, which, of course, they do not fully understand, and the result is a humorous misunderstanding that lands them in jail.

The Spanish episode begins with the family sitting around the table while the eldest son Toni attempts to tell a joke about the dictator. Even though the family is safely at home out of earshot of any potential informants, the father is fearful of allowing his son to say anything against the regime. In the transadaptation, the joke stays the same with a few simple substitutions: The Spanish *Guardia Civil* is replaced by the Portuguese secret police, the *PIDE,* and Franco by Salazar, with just a mention that Salazar is sick. From the very first scene, the regime is a source of fear in both versions.

In the Spanish version, the family watches a NO-DO report on Gibraltar complete with a reminder that the English stole this Spanish treasure and that the customs station on the border is a "un símbolo

doloroso de la separación". The older brother Toni interrupts to say that the Yankees are worse than the British, and later he will participate in a protest in which students burn an American flag. In school, Carlos's teacher gives a lesson on the Treaty of Utrecht that gave the English control over Gibraltar. Many of the old stereotypes about Franco's imperialist discourse are parodied and ridiculed in this scene, and the exaggeration becomes even more delightful when Carlos fully embraces the discourse and decides to become a national hero and reclaim Gibraltar for Spain. Carlos and his friends go home and wage imaginary battles against the English, dreaming of sacrificing themselves to become national heroes. There is a fascinating mixing of enemies as Carlos imagines himself as the sacrificial citizen in Goya's famous painting *3 de mayo,* which shows the Spanish people resisting Napoleon's armies. Of course, in Carlos's imagination he is fighting English imperialism and not the French. In the end, he just wants to die a hero and be buried in the *Valle de los Caídos*.

The owner of the local Kiosk, appropriately named Cervantes, invites Carlos and his friends to join him in a government-approved manifestation to have Gibraltar returned to Spain. In conversations with his older brother, Carlos has learned that "imperialism" is bad and "dictatorship" is bad – two new words for Carlos – , so in their protest against English imperialism, Carlos and his friends begin by yelling "abajo el imperialismo" and eventually switch to "abajo la dictadura". Of course, they are arrested and the father is summoned to the police station for questioning before they are released. The episode ends with the viewer having to negotiate the very palpable fear that the parents feel from being labelled enemies of the state and the humour of watching Carlos win the admiration of all of his friends for being the first of the group to achieve a police record. In the Spanish version, English imperialism is presented as a threat to Spanish nationalism, but this discourse is also exposed as a ridiculous political ploy of the dictatorship. The episode clearly shows that the average Spaniard in 1968 was not afraid of the English, but rather of his or her own government. Perhaps the bigger fear, however, is that of not keeping up with an expanding consumer culture. The youth culture does recognize the silliness of the government's insistence on calling Great Britain the enemy, and the older brother Toni and his friends will hold a subversive protest against the United States.

In the Portuguese version, instead of watching a documentary on Gibraltar, the family watches a news program detailing how in 1961 Portugal had lost control of its colonies in India – Goa, Daman and Diu – when the Indian army annexed them. Carlos wants to know why Portugal was robbed of its colonies. Once again, Toni is the voice that exposes the regime's manipulative discourses. This time he does not criticize US imperialism, but rather Portuguese colonialism: "Quem é que roubou quem, Carlitos? Foram os indianos, ou foram os portugueses?"

In the next scene, the camera jumps to Carlos's classroom, where once again we see a teacher who is a caricature of the national discourses of the regime. The Treaty of Tordesillas substitutes the Treaty of Utrecht, and the teacher berates all attacks on the Portuguese empire, especially those at the hands of the Spanish. The students respond by asking why the Spanish robbed Olivenza. Olivenza, a territory on the Spanish-Portuguese border, frequently passed between Castilian, Portuguese and Arabic control in the Middle Ages before becoming fully Portuguese in 1297. In 1801 during the War of the Oranges, a prelude to the battles against Napoleon, Spain annexed Olivença, making it Olivenza. Once Napoleon was defeated, Spain and Portugal signed a treaty in which Spain agreed to return Olivenza to Portuguese control, but the return never happened. Today in practice, it is not a contested territory, but officially, Portugal does not recognize Spanish sovereignty in Olivenza, and while many Spaniards have never heard of this small Spanish town, all Portuguese recognize the town as a symbol of the bad blood between Spain and Portugal. As in the Spanish version, the kids leave school and go home to role-play fighting the Spanish, this time imagining themselves to be medieval knights and dreaming of being buried in the *Mosteiro dos Jerónimos*.

The tension Portugal-Spain in this episode is further exaggerated in a later conversation that Carlos and his friends will have with the owner of the Kiosk, who in the Portuguese version is named Camões.

> CARLOS: Vamos reconquistar Olivença aos Espanhóis! Eles não são pretos, pois não?
> CAMÕES: Não, são brancos por fora e amarelos por dentro. E o amarelo é a cor da traição. De Espanha, nem bom vento, nem bom casamento.

Camões invites them to a government-sponsored protest about the loss of Goa. Carlos asks, "É uma manifestação contra os espanhóis?" Camões respondes "É como se fosse!" Once at the protest, just as in the Spanish version, their cries "abaixo o imperialismo" turn into "abaixo a ditadura", and they are arrested. In both versions, there is a funny episode in the jail while they wait for their parents to come and get them in which Carlos makes an escape plan, and they begin digging a tunnel. The difference, however, is that in the Portuguese version, Carlos imagines that the police are really Spaniards in disguise.

Both episodes expose the manipulative political discourses of each respective regime and the ways in which different sectors of society were complicit in these discourses. The Spanish version shows the hypocrisy of the Franco government that decried English presence in Gibraltar, but accepted U.S. troops in Vietnam. The Portuguese version pokes fun at the Portuguese fear of a Spanish invasion that had not fully disappeared in 1968, nor in 2007 when the episode aired for the first time, which coincidently was only a few months after José Saramago's notorious prediction that one day Portugal would be part of Spain had set off a huge public outcry in the press (e.g. Silva 2007).

The similarities between the two versions of this episode are such that it is easy to miss a crucial change that happened as *Cuéntame* became *Conta-me*. The discourse about Gibraltar is not simply replaced with a Portuguese equivalent, but rather with two different discourses that are relevant to Portugal in 1968 and in 2007. Olivenza substitutes Gibraltar in parts of the episode to ridicule the long-held Portuguese animosity toward Spain. However, in other parts of the episode, Gibraltar is substituted with former or current Portuguese colonial holdings. While the Spanish version exposes England and the United States as imperialistic, the Portuguese version offers a self-critique calling out Portugal's own imperialism. Images of lost colonial holdings in India, African guerrilla fighters, and the United Nation's outcry against the Portuguese Colonial Wars appear regularly on the Lopes' TV set. These external threats to the discourse of Portuguese nationhood are never satirized, as in the Spanish version, and instead of simply believing the regime's discourse, the characters begin to question Portugal's complicity with imperialism. The Portuguese university students, like the Spanish ones, criticize

the Vietnam War, but never actually start the protest; rather they criticize their own government.

Conclusion

While the producers of *Conta-me* purchased the entire *Cuéntame* project, including the modernity story about becoming more European and more socially progressive, and they were often content to simply "transadapt" the Spanish series into a Portuguese context, the subtle changes that happened as *Cuéntame* became *Conta-me* are not all formulaic substitutions; rather, some are thoughtful critiques of self and other. The newsreels in the RTP archives continuously complicated the seemingly straightforward project of transadaptation by visually reproducing what Boaventura de Sousa Santos has called Portugal's tendency toward "unruly representations" of self, which spring from that fact that since the fifteenth century, Portugal has existed in, what he identifies as, two time-spaces simultaneously: the European/modern zone and the Colonial/premodern zone (2011: 403). In the Portuguese version, we witness the constant insertion of this second zone that is largely absent from the Spanish original, but not because Spain did not have a colonial zone to contend with. 1968 was precisely the year that Spain lost control of its final colonial holding in Guinea Equatorial. The Spanish series acknowledges this event with one brief mention in episode four "El día de la raza" in which Carlos, after seeing a NO-DO documentary on uprisings in Guinea Equatorial, asks his mother why these blacks no longer want to be Spanish. The mother sputters an answer to make him content, and the colonial zone miraculously disappears. The Portuguese series, rightfully, forces the Portuguese audience to deal with this part of their history. The show, however, does not merely parade these troubling images across the screen, but also suggests that consciously or subconsciously Portuguese society was complicit in Portugal's dealings inside the colonial zone and does not offer a neat "happy ending". Quite the contrary, the tension caused by these images is never resolved. There is a consciousness not just of the need to engage these unresolved memories of Portugal's past, but also an implicit awareness of the lack of these images in the Spanish version, albeit Spain's 20th-century colonial zone was significantly smaller and less costly to human life than the Portuguese one.

A purely national reading of *Cuéntame* or *Conta-me* will always be flawed if it does not first acknowledge that these series began as media memories that were constructed according to international formulas and circulated within global marketing strategies that defy national boundaries. Furthermore, the Portuguese adaptation is also an interpretive act of Spanish culture that does not merely translate and substitute a Portuguese cultural marker for each Spanish one, but rather is constantly negotiating various pasts at once. On one level, Portuguese memories made in Spain are flat mediated products robbed of their aura of uniqueness, just as Benjamin predicted long ago would happen when technology allowed us to reproduce art infinitely (2007: 223). Yet, they are also a unique product that grapples with Portugal's distinctive struggles to remember a problematic past.

Together *Cuéntame* and *Cónta-me* speak to our ability to retain some qualities of uniqueness in a mediated world that was made somewhere else. Indeed, it is this very national/transnational dialect that makes it worthy of our research. Mediated memories are necessarily interconnected with the memories of others, which, undoubtedly, is why audiences keep watching, not just to learn about themselves, but also to learn about others. For the near future, Portugal will certainly continue to remake successful Spanish television series because their cultural proximity really does make this project easier than adapting stories from farther away. Media and cultural scholars should pay attention, as these travelling narratives have much to tell us about Portuguese culture.

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